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ISSUE : #5

First
Anniversary
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SANDRIDER

Samothrace

LOZIEN

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Letter from the Founder:

Well, we made it a year, and it's been an absolute blast. When I started this, I had no idea things would get to this point so quickly. It's getting pretty damn huge, and I've got so many people to thank for making this what it has become. I don't have much room to thank everyone individually, but know that I am extremely thankful for your efforts and your time. To the writers, photographers, editors, anyone who has donated their free time, thank you. This wouldn't exist without you. To the bands, thanks for letting us feature you. It's been a pleasure helping spread the gospel of heavy music in Seattle and beyond. So many people have been a major part in helping with the success of this, and I want you all to know how much it means to me, personally. To the readers, bottom line, this could not be possible without you. Thank you for reading. To the future, we are just getting started. We plan on booking a show every issue, plus some. We've also got some other great stuff in the works I can't talk about yet, but it's coming, and it's going to be big. Stay tuned for more info and hopefully many more issues to come.

Thanks again,
James Ballinger



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SANDRIDER

By Jeffery McNulty

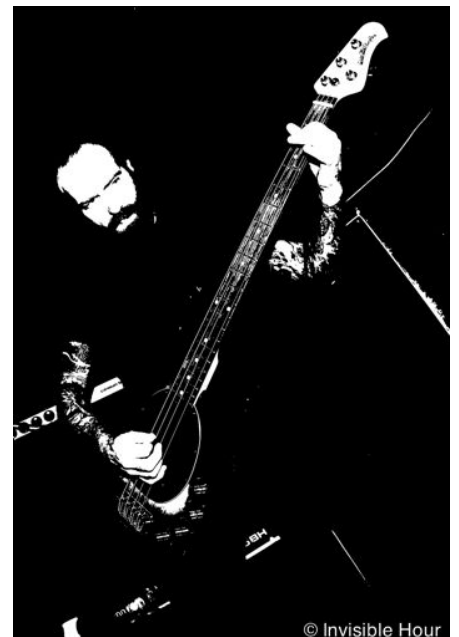
Photos by Invisible Hour

Sandrider is a phoenix raised from the ashes of two of Seattle's best bands ever (or cinders really since The Ruby Doe still plays occasionally, and when Sandrider formed Akimbo had yet to perform one of the most amazing shows of 2012). Their final mind-blowing set made almost everybody's top ten, alongside Sandrider's self-titled first record. Ironic, because not only did it come out in December 2011, it had been in the can a while before it was released.

Initially intended as a demo recorded with Matt Bayles, the production and performances exceeded all expectations. "That'll work!" says drummer Nat Damm, "...we had the material, and we wanted to just put it down. We didn't have a label or anything, and we had very little initiative to go and find anyone to put it out. This is where Nik came in, and it just kind of happened."

At their practice space, my old friends gave me a sneak peak of a new song. Even half written it was pure Sandrider: heavy, melodic and truly epic. I would expect nothing less from these three amazing musicians. More new songs are on the way. "We've got seven or eight that are in various states of completion," muses Jon Weisnewski. "We have a couple of shows in the new year, and we would very much like to start playing a few of these new ones. I'm personally starting to feel a little fatigued with the seven songs that we have been playing at every show, so I'd like to mix it up a little bit."

One such song is the opener "Children." "I love playing it, but I'm kinda done playing it because we've opened every set with that - for years!" Nat exclaims. Not likely as it's everyone else's pick for opener, and it was the first song they wrote together. "Every time we play that song I think about the first time we played it together," says bassist Jesse Roberts, "'cause I feel the energy that we had together, it was like whoa, this is fuckin' working! Like right off the bat."



© Invisible Hour



Sandrider began as an outlet for Jon to get back into playing six strings. "I'd been playing bass in Akimbo for a lot of years. Akimbo had been really busy, and there wasn't enough time. When I'd play guitar it was just like noodling and stuff. I just wanted to write songs, compose with the guitar, and get together with dudes and start playing music again. I wasn't really down with playing with anyone else

on drums except Nat..." After jamming with Ben Verellen a few times, they ran into scheduling problems due to the fact that Ben was busy with Helms Alee. Jesse is an accomplished tattoo artist. One day, while in his chair at Lucky Devil, Jon almost jokingly suggested that Jesse sit in with the band.

At first they didn't play out much at all. "Not giving a fuck is the new DIY!" laughs Jon. "It would only be when one of us would really want to play a show." Nat elaborates, "We would get offers and every once in a while something good would show up, and we'd be like, 'oh let's do this one!' But for the most part it was like, 'nah, I don't want to play some shitty Wednesday night.'" A well-earned privilege of seasoned road warriors is skipping the shows with audiences consisting of only the other bands and bar staff "if you're lucky..." remarks Jon, "although there was a magic time over on the Eastside where Ground Zero and The Old Firehouse would be packed every weekend regardless of what band was playing. And if you could just get on one of those shows... you'd be playing to an almost sold out audience guaranteed."

Nat remembers, "Well, it only cost five bucks. We'd go see shows. and we didn't have any idea who was playing it was like, 'I got five bucks, I wanna get out of the house, let's go see who's playing.'" Nat and Jon came up in that Eastside scene along with a myriad of other popular bands, but at the same time in the city there was a second coming of hard, noisy music, and Ruby Doe was the band to watch. "We were all just waiting for you guys to be picked up and explode." Jon tells Jesse, who replies ironically,

"Ha ha! Showed them!" perhaps referring to the fact that some bands, however deserving, never quite break out into national attention.

Continued on last page...



Samothrace

By Brian Kim

Photos by Alan Hunter

In ancient Greece, on the island called Samothrace, there existed a massive temple complex known as the Sanctuary of the Great Gods. Home to one of many cults whose exact practices were kept secret, the Sanctuary held many sacred rituals and ceremonies. Some scholars believe that the powerful visions of these rituals were produced with the aid of psychedelic agents. Culling the name and mysticism of the Greek island, Seattle's doom metal prophets Samothrace conjure epic blues-infused stoner odysseys.



With expansive songs ranging from 9 to 20 minutes in length, Samothrace deftly maneuver through ultra-heavy sludge ambience and electrified blazing riffage. Listening to their smokey sonic monuments in their entirety is an endeavor not to be taken lightly, but the rewards for such dedication can be glorious.

There are moments not unlike emerging from the depths of a fiery pit, surrounded by suffocatingly thick waves of distortion, swirling and rising above as though the devil himself were reaching out towards the heavens. Yet just as easily as these dark forces gain power, they can be obliterated by a sudden and overwhelming emptiness, a bleak yet majestic juxtaposition between negative space and ultimate darkness.

Reverence To Stone, the band's 2nd record and their first new release in almost four years, is without a doubt a must-listen for anyone who considers themselves even remotely into the doom/stoner/sludge category of metal, and despite being only two tracks, this colossus of an album clocks in at nearly 35 minutes.

Throughout these two labyrinthian songs, vocalist/guitarist Bryan Spinks keeps his tortured howls sparse, and more often than not, lets the instrumental composition carry the immense weight of the song. When he does let loose his monstrous screams, they add a bone-chilling layer to the already decimated landscape painted with the help of guitarist Renata Castanga, bassist Dylan Desmond, and drummer Joe Axler.

While Samothrace currently calls Seattle its home, the band has origins in the Midwest, catalyzed in Lawrence, KS where the band came together from Oklahoma and New Mexico in 2006, "out of a desire to play heavy music together" explains Spinks. "After several drummers and a few months we had a set and began playing live. We recorded our

demo in 2007 and started moving quickly after that on touring, recording, etc."

The Midwestern influence in Samothrace's dark-bluesy sound is apparent, and in 2008 the band impressed and teamed up with longtime friend Dave Adelson, formerly of Alternative Tentacles, to release the landmark debut, *Life's Trade*, on his 20 Buck Spin label.



"[Dave is] an amazing person and has dedicated his life to music, he split from AT and started 20 Buck Spin which I've had the opportunity to work with with a couple of my other bands" says Axler. "Great guy, great label, one of the few that is around for actual love for music and art and not for a business."

The release of *Life's Trade* and the band's subsequent touring and media praise put Samothrace on the map as a force to be reckoned with in the metal scene, and soon after, the band packed its bags and relocated to Seattle. "We had been planning on it for a while. We already had many friends that had moved up there from Lawrence, so it seemed the natural progression for us," says Spinks.

However, after the band's exodus to the Pacific Northwest, they found themselves confronted with every hard working musician's worst enemy - real life. The various outside elements surrounding each member kept them from being able to get the hardened war machine called Samothrace back in full operational condition, but that is not to say the band did not stay busy. Axler also drums in tech/death outfit Theories and crust/grind band Skarp, while Desmond plays bass in doom drum/bass duo Bell Witch and operates Capitol Hill's fantastic vegan friendly restaurant/bar/venue, the Highline.

Now that the stars and planets have shifted into their proper alignments, these loyal doom worshippers are back on the offensive. The band most recently has been invited to play the Danish DIY music festival, Heavy Days In Doom Town, a self proclaimed "celebration of all things loud and heavy". Following the four days of international underground music, Samothrace has another two weeks of touring around Europe planned before returning home to do more writing, recording, and touring. Prior to the band's European adventure, they'll be hitting the road stateside, traversing territory in the Midwest, the South, and the East Coast.



Starting off this Iliad of a tour schedule will be a kickoff at the Seattle Passive Aggressive's First Anniversary show, fortifying a stellar lineup of Norska, Great Falls, and Grenades on Feb 15th at the Highline.

<http://listen.20buckspin.com/album/reverence-to-stone>

LOZEN

By Pamela Sternin
Photos by Melissa Bird

Lozen was born in the late 1840's. She was a prophet, a skilled



equestrian, a survivalist, a marksman, a severe warrior in battle with the blood of the Chihenne Chiricahua Apache running through her veins. She was a respected leader bonded with the force and mystic harmony of the Earth. An unhesitating woman with the courage and daring resolve to let nothing stand in her way. This is the inspiration of Tacoma's finest rock

rock duo, Lozen.

When Justine Valdez (percussion/vox) and Hozoji (Hoz) Matheson-Margullis (guitar/bass/vox) come together they forge an untamed and unnamed genre. Their blended voices have all the dynamics of a siren song to the howling of a demon ravaging through your ribcage to take your black heart back to Hell. When it comes to instrumentation, this band couldn't be farther from the leash of a definition. (Seriously, anything goes.) Justine is a drummer, but I feel like that simple title is so limiting when it comes to the extent of her abilities.

She is a percussionist with all the brutality and grace of a lioness. Take for instance, her sizzling hi hats with a natural instinct to play unnatural beats.

Hozji trades off between guitar and bass bringing the band to limitless heights. Within even one song her instruments set a variance of tones anywhere from the thuggish march of a bouldering giant dragging around a Cadillac-sized mace to the feeling of being thrown from a clean, meditative calm into a bay of piranhas. Not to mention the incorporation of a looping pedal adding a grander dimension to their already complex basis.

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Some of the best bands come from old friendships and these ladies have a history dating back to high school, almost 17 years ago. After graduation they decided to live together, but under no fault of their own (a friend got caught busting through a window, climbing up the side of their building to get into their apartment and trashed the place) they got evicted. After that Justine moved to Bellingham while Hozi stayed in Tacoma. Communication between the two was occasional until Justine got a drum kit. As Hozi was just starting to play bass and guitar, she started making regular trips to Bellingham to jam with Justine and within the first couple practices they had written their first song.

This January 30th will mark Lozen's 8-year anniversary. From the very beginning the idea behind Lozen was to incorporate guitar and bass, but 8 years in, Hozi is sticking more to bass. Midway through their U.S. tour with Hot Victory/Trophy Wife it dawned on her that she didn't want to go back and forth between bass and guitar so much, "It feels slightly more natural, riffs come out easier. And, that's not to say I won't go back to guitar. It's just for now I like the streamlining of having one instrument for one set without switching things up." Right now their entire set is bass driven. They do have newer songs that are centered around guitar but those tunes remain on the back burner because goddamn, the set flows smooth as puddin' when it's movin' like the thick molasses of bottom-end bass.

Their mentality around painting a song can be defined as structured free form. No dictation, no trying to sway it in any forced direction. Everyone is honestly putting in what comes naturally to them. Hozi and Justine are two eclectic halves making a whole. As they are both drummers, they tend to inspire each other. "I think the best shit is when Justine writes something that is not anywhere near what I would have written or imagined. It takes the song on a whole different path that makes it Lozen.", describes Hozi, "As a general rule for myself I want to write something that I can't play yet and therefore doing it over and over again, down the line I'll get it. In our new song, In a Pinch, there's a part that I still have a hard time playing. It's fun just to play what you're able to play but it's good to throw in a hook to make it a little challenging." Wanting to use whatever time is available between their two busy schedules (Justine is rigorously studying towards her Masters degree in Teaching), they recently took advantage of the opportunity to head down the West Coast on a quick mini-tour with local band, Tacos. In the meantime, Lozen has a newly recorded 7-minute long song called In a Pinch, which is going to be on the flip side of a split 7" they're doing with Portland's own, Hot Victory. Catch Lozen on February 9th at the Rendezvous with Brokaw and Bitches Crystal.



Local Artist Spotlight

by James Ballinger

Ben Verellen has been churning out vocals and riffs in Seattle forever. His rap sheet includes some of the Northwest's most notable and influential bands. Names like Harkonen, Roy, These Arms Are Snakes, and Helms Alee have helped shape the face of heavy music in Seattle, and Ben is even drumming for Constant Lovers now as well. Outside of that, Ben runs a successful amplifier company, Verellen Amplifiers, that is influencing tone all across the country with some extremely note-worthy clients.

"When I started building amps I had just come off of several years spent recording bands and touring, so I just reached out to all of the people I met doing that stuff, offering to build them whatever they wanted for cost of parts. Some of those guys were in real active bands like Russian Circles, Young Widows, Minus the Bear, etc... and that is how word got out. They hipped their buddies to it and so on," Ben explains on the success of the amps.

Ben started with modest beginnings, but things have steadily increased since then. "I didn't build my first amp until I was a junior at the UW Electrical Engineering program. I was 27 then." After that, it was only a matter of time before eyes increased in size, and the thought of something more came to fruition. "I think I always wanted to do something for myself. That idea gets engrained when you grow up around all of that entrepreneurial stuff surrounding punk rock. You know, zines, labels, etc... you see young people doing it for themselves. It's inspiring."

Verellen offers a full line of amps, cabs, pedals, preamps, and even accessories. Amps such as the Meatsmoke, Loucks, and Skyhammer are becoming more prevalent in the back lines of bands of various genres, but even floor pedal preamps are getting used in existing amp setups. After a successful kickstarter campaign, the Meatsmoke and Skyhammer preamps are available to get some of the Verellen tone at a fraction of the cost of the amp heads. "The preamp pedals have been a sort of big hit for us. And agreed, it made sense as a way to offer something more affordable that wasn't of lesser quality, just the preamp part of the equation with no corners cut."

As with any successful small business, big business is anxiously awaiting the appropriate time to pounce and get their paws dirty.

"There was a company that wanted to involve us in an overseas manufactured version of the Meatsmoke bass amp for mass distribution. That would have probably ruined us if we went through with it."

Continued on next page....



Sandrider Continued...

We are getting our third wind in Seattle, there has never been a more varied and vibrant heavy underground music scene than the one we have right now being documented by labels such as Good to Die, Profound Lore, 20 Buck Spin and Zion's Gate. Jesse agrees, "For sure, yeah. What's cool too is that I think everyone in this room has been continuing to make heavy music regardless of what's been going on in Seattle, and it's cool to see that counter culture has never died. No matter how much crappy popular music that comes out of Seattle there is always going to be people that are making music against that." Well-said brother, well-said.

Sandrider will be recording new music with Matt Bayles again this March. See them on January 25th with Big Business and Bali Girls at the Shakedown in Bellingham, February 2nd with Black Breath at the Crocodile, and March 8th at the Columbia City Theater with Helms Alee. <http://www.goodtodierecords.com/band/sandrider/>
<http://sandrider.bandcamp.com/>
For the full interview, go to theseattlepa.com, and check out Jeffery's interview with Sandrider that is gear focused at totalcastrationmagazine.blogspot.com/

Ben Verellen Continued...

But the future seems firm, making all the amps by hand and keeping them quality. I asked about the possibilities of making some more affordable products, even some solid-state amps. Ben is definitely open to the idea at some point. "I am interested in some solid-state sounds, especially the early stuff that has its own character. You know, the old Sunn and Acoustic stuff that doesn't try to sound like a tube amp. Those amps embrace that mid range-y bark. I'd like to delve into some of that stuff. And yes, it can be done for less money, and that's interesting for sure!"

Additionally, Ben is shaping up to expand the product line nicely with the addition of some key items adding to the product line. "There's some recording stuff, tube mic preamps, compressors, EQs, etc. I'd really like to make an all tube mixing console someday. We're also working on a line of all tube home stereo hi-fi stuff. That's probably closer to realization." Musically, Ben is keeping busy too. "Helms Alee is knee-deep in tightening up for recording our 3rd record. Constant Lovers are also on the verge of being ready to do a new record. Some shows scattered here and there between those bands. Harkonen might do a couple shows in March." In closing, I asked about the future label of Helms Alee after the announcement of their current label, HydraHead, decided to discontinue putting out new records. "We're planning to do it ourselves. We're talking about 7" on a few labels, but this next full length we're going to give it a shot."

Check out the full product line at verellenamplifiers.com



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VHR005
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 from multi-ethnic
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VHR008
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